

Deterritorial Investigations



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Acceleration Now (or how we can stop fearing and learn to love chaos)

Posted on [April 10, 2013](#) by [edmundberger](#)

The story goes like this: Earth is captured by a technocapital singularity as renaissance rationalitization and oceanic navigation lock into commoditization take-off. Logistically accelerating techno-economic interactivity crumbles social order in auto-sophisticating machine runaway. As markets learn to manufacture intelligence, politics modernizes, upgrades paranoia, and tries to get a grip. ¹

These are the opening lines of “Meltdown,” a short, hallucinatory psalm, spoken on behalf of the capitalism of the information age and, more specifically, the schizoid bifurcation points occurring in the cracks and fissures it triggers across the globe. Initially impenetrable yet strangely alluring, the text’s language is poetic in form, its progenitors found in critical theory and cyberpunk fiction and film, and its logic machinic and amphetamine addled. The place is the University of Warwick in the early 90s, and the author is a former Continental Philosophy lecturer by the name of Nick Land. “Meltdown: planetary china-syndrome, dissolution of the biosphere into the technosphere, terminal speculative bubble crisis, ultravirus, and revolution stripped of all christian-socialist eschatology.”

A little background information: “Meltdown” is torn from the pages of *Abstract Culture*, the journal/decentralized cultural mirror put out by the now-defunct Cybernetic Cultures Research Unit (CCRU). With its brief nexus located at Britain’s Warwick University, CCRU was the brainchild of cyber-feminist Sadie Plant and Land himself, with a supporting cast of characters who have gone on to radicalize social and academic spaces in various ways: Steve Goodman, an early innovator of dubstep, well known under his moniker Kode9; Mark Fisher, the force behind the K-Punk blog and author of *Capitalist Realism*; Kodwo Eshun, whose work *More Brilliant than the Sun* employs “sonic fiction” to explore the musical trajectories of afro-futurism; Iain Hamilton Grant, a philosopher and translator of texts by Jean Baudrillard and Jean-Francois Lyotard; among others. Running through the thoughts manifested by these individuals is the emergent

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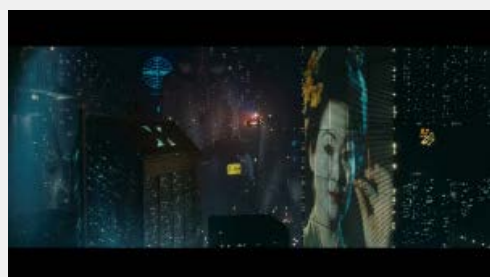
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philosophical lineage called ‘speculative realism,’ eschewing post-Kantianism’s correlationism in exchange for a quasi-nihilist metaphysical realism abound with nods to Lovecraft and modern cultural trends.

Its impossible to speak of CCRU and the frantic cybertheories they repeatedly injected into dry academic ivory towerism without providing a cursory mention to Sadie Plant. A graduate of the University of Manchester’s philosophy program, Plant’s Ph.D thesis-turned book *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* gained her renown and a position as a researcher fellow at the University of Warwick’s Social Sciences department. Her curious brand of post-Situationist/post-Thatcher cyber-feminism initially seemed to fit the bill for Warwick’s intellectual climate, drenched in information technology research and the hybrid political philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. To assist her work, CCRU was set up in 1995 as a sort of adjunct facility – but when joined by Nick Land, it quickly transformed itself into what has been described as a sort of university equivalent to Colonel Kurtz and his frightening, psychedelic war machine from the end of *Apocalypse Now*. Land’s animosity towards the academic universe’s unwritten commandments and careerist bureaucracy had already been readily apparent in his 1992 work *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism*, a “deranged mix of prose-poem, spiritual autobiography and rigorous explication of the implications of Bataille’s thought.”² He quickly overtook Plant’s position as steward of the unit, spinning it into a thousand directions, simultaneously encompassing philosophy, physics, biology, mysticism, and all manner of beyonds, sidestepping through the disciplines and exploring the strange spaces between them in a sort of D.I.Y. remix of Norbert Weiner’s original research into cybernetics.

CCRU received ample boosts from sweaty dance floors moved by the sample-heavy bass and backbeats of jungle, dropping chopped-up and scrambled variants of previous musical cultures into the blossoming rave scene of the UK. Jungle’s method of appropriating micro-units of traditional sonic form and social detritus by the way of Kingston’s dub sound systems and Britain’s own recent punk/post-punk past provided a close analogue, in the eyes of the Warwick’s renegade explorers, to the overdriven systematics of post-Fordist capitalism; its tendency towards crisis were also collapsing into Bataille’s feverish fixation on existence in the face of the apocalypse. Capitalism and jungle collide through *Abstract Culture* with pop culture nuggets reflecting the technological innovations in military hardware, the internet, and other communication platforms: film such as *Blade Runner* and *Terminator*, cyberpunk fiction like William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, each capturing visions of the future where technology has reached escape velocity, exiting the terrestrial plane with a humanity dragged along with it. Limits dissolving not simply into thresholds, but innumerable exit points.



The world of tomorrow, from Blade Runner

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The world of today, Shanghai

And thus Land and the CCRU, now minus Plant, produced a bizarre and complex theoretical position called “accelerationism.” Academia was stagnant, reflecting a wider stagnation in the government and the social. State-thought pervaded every level, stifling creativity and movement, reducing everything to the drab and gray monoliths of housing projects – repetition. Everywhere was overwritten with codes, essentially dictating what one can think and what one could do. Even the so-called opposition was complicit. The Old Left was incapable of transforming itself with the changing times, getting themselves lodged in the muck of the laborist paradigm of big unionism and legislative quagmires.

With the dawn of complex information technologies and its proliferation on the grassroots level, combined with the perceived assault on stateform through the neoliberal program, CCRU produced a radically new proposition for revolutionary change that differed wildly from the Marxist-lite meanderings of the professional left. Emancipation from traditional and constraining modes of thought could come, they argued, from the apparatuses of capitalism itself. Monetary flows had the capability, as Marx himself had observed, to make everything solid “melt into air.” Solidity was stagnation; accelerating the melting process thus became essential. Looking at it like this, Marx can be seen as a proto-accelerationist, counting on capitalism to cultivate the proper moment where the “revolution” – whatever that truly means – would flash into existence. But Marx’s method was based in dialectical materialism, a reworking of what is otherwise a philosophical position fixed in a linear and totalizing cosmology. Land and the CCRU, on the other hand, resisted the Hegelian discourse that was the trademark of the dominant state-thought. Instead, they relied heavily on post-Marxist, anti-Hegelian theory emerging in France following the collapse of May ’68’s utopian aspiration – namely, the work of Deleuze and Guattari and those who followed in their footsteps.

The Accelerationist Moment

So now it is high time to speak of the disembodiment of reality, this sort of breakdown which, one should think is applied to a self-multiplication proliferating among things and the perception of them in our minds, which is where they do belong – Antonin Artaud, “Description of a physical state”³

Several key texts from the 1970s have been identified as the locus of the accelerationist theory: Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), Lyotard’s *Libidinal Economy* (1974), Baudrillard’s *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), and, I would argue, his infamous *Forget Foucault* (1977), with an aftershock of sorts

occurring in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000). All these works share a commonality in new understandings of capitalism, socialism, control, and resistance; they map new and expectant cartographies of the then-present and the now-current future. Furthermore, each zeroes in the nature of the new paradigm where the logic of revolt that fueled the events of 1968 have become the twin logics of production and consumption, the new language of the marketplace.

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* oscillates somewhere between fiction and reality, between radical critique and poetic manifesto – utilizing an assault on Freudianism and Hegelian dialectic with an arsenal of weapons stripped from Marx, Spinoza and Nietzsche, they propose a new model of the unconscious mind. No longer is it a theater of symbols, as Freud posited, but a factory where flows of machines of desire couple and disconnect from one another. Their model of the machinic unconsciousness collapses the superficial boundaries between man and nature, mind and body, and all other manner of dialectics. Current social structures, on the other hand, impose boundaries and block flows, reroute them, capture them for their own rationale, and *overcode* them. Deleuze and Guattari further their strange new world by producing the concept of 'nomad thought' – a formulation with its roots in the Situationist *derive* or drift, a manner of looking for divergent modes of becoming that finds passages to the outside of the logic and 'rationalized' discipline that power creates. This nomadic mechanism is complimented with a charting of the convergences between capitalism and the desiring flows, showing how the system's tendency towards dissolution breaks down the traditional codework. This isn't to say that capitalism as-is is the fiscal equivalent of nomadic thought, but there are similarities, the most principle being the concept of deterritorialization. Probing these approaches, Deleuze and Guattari ask

...which is the revolutionary path? Is there one? – To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist "economic solution"? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go further still, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not withdraw from the process, but to go further, to "accelerate the process," as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet.⁴



Gilles Deleuze

Even if this is the only place in book where the theory of accelerationism is expressed directly, the entire work illustrates the need for a revolution built upon moving into a beyond through the folds of deterritorialization. They call for a "schizoanalysis," a radical new form of psychotherapy built upon the model of the schizophrenic – as opposed to the Freudian school's emphasis on neurosis – to allow for brushes with alterity (otherness) to trigger accelerated processes of becoming. Schizoanalysis, nomadic thought, the flows, there is little separating these, and each urges us to go further and further, beyond doctrinaire Marxism and even the text of *Anti-Oedipus* itself.

Within four years, Jean-Francois Lyotard, a veteran of May '68 and a close friend of Deleuze, had taken up their challenge, effectively schizoanalyzing *Anti-Oedipus* into a strange new formation that he dubbed *Libidinal Economy*. He would later disown the book, calling it “evil;” while this is certainly hyperbolic, the ideas expressed within isolated him from mainstream Marxist currents. Rejecting the left’s vanguardist approach to what they characterize as ‘proletarian consciousness,’ Lyotard conflates capitalism’s engine with the worker’s *desire* for deterritorialization and decoding. “Hang on tight and spit on me,” he commands, thrusting forward the insistence that the working class “enjoyed the hysterical, masochistic, whatever exhaustion it was of hanging on in the mines, in the foundries, in the factories, in hell, they enjoyed it, enjoyed the mad destruction of their organic body which was indeed imposed upon them, they enjoyed the decomposition of their personal identity...”⁵ Further still, the intelligentsia, by looking to direct the worker’s desires, was acting in a rather counter-revolutionary model and was complicit with the bourgeoisie:

*Why political intellectuals, do you incline towards the proletariat? In commiseration for what? I realize that a proletarian would hate you, you have no hatred because you are bourgeois, privileged, smooth-skinned types, but also because you dare not say that the only important thing there is to say, that one can enjoy swallowing the shit of capital, its materials, its metal bars, its polystyrene, its books, its sausage pâtés, swallowing tonnes of it till you burst – and because instead of saying this, which is also what happens in the desires of those who work with their hands, arses and heads, ah, you become a leader of men, what a leader of pimps, you lean forward and divulge: ah, but that's alienation, it isn't pretty, hang on, we'll save you from it, we will work to liberate you from this wicked affection for servitude, we will give you dignity. And in this way you situate yourselves on the most despicable side, the moralistic side where you desire that our capitalized's desire be totally ignored, brought to a standstill, you are like priests with sinners...*⁶

After quickly as it had begun, Lyotard immediately retreated from his vitriolic theory-fiction and from a Deleuzian perspective in general, later penning his seminal work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* in 1979. But nomadic wanderings were continued by Jean Baudrillard, whose philosophical trail had begun in the Situationist ferment but were becoming increasingly difficult and abstract. If Deleuze and Guattari had captured the late Sixties zeitgeist and Lyotard had taken these energies to produce a proto-punk refusal, Baudrillard’s *Symbolic Exchange and Death* and *Forget Foucault* was the first blast of cyberpunk – “it didn’t look like anything else that was being published in France during that period. It didn’t seem to belong there, or anywhere for that matter. It was as if it had fallen from outer space.”⁷ *Symbolic Exchange* assaults Deleuze, Guattari, and Lyotard, arguing that their work with ‘desire’ bound them into the dialectical system they were critiquing, and that the schizophrenic flows that desire moved in acted as justification for capitalism itself, which was then transitioning from the post-war Keynesian structure into free-floating, transnational neoliberalism. In other words, he could see fully the spectre of accelerationism and what it meant for any revolutionary alternatives. But, as Benjamin Noy points out, “The difficulty is that Baudrillard’s own catastrophising comprises a kind of negative acceleration, in which he seeks out the point of immanent *reversal* that inhabits and destabilizes capital.”⁸ With the aid of anthropology and Bataille’s work, he created the concept of “symbolic exchange,” dissolving the traditional value assigned in the marketplace of capitalist exchanges. This, he says, constitutes a “death function” for the system – but it can only occur if we

challenge capitalism to embrace what it is, a monstrous and surreal complex, “endlessly cutting the branch on which it sits.”⁹

If Baudrillard directly foreshadowed the non-leftist accelerationism and fixation on Bataillan apocalypses of Nick Land, Hardt and Negri’s *Empire* attempted to re-situate Deleuze and Guattari’s original idea into a [post-]Marxist format in search of a liberatory politics. In 1972, the year that *Anti-Oedipus* had been published, President Nixon had removed the US dollar from the gold standard, effectively stripping capitalism from any material base and transforming it into a language game, a semiotic system of control that could circle the globe unfixed from the structures that had always augmented monetary flows. It was financial deterritorialization coming to fruition, and, to quote Baudrillard, power had “dissolved purely and simply in a manner that still escapes us.” This power, dispersed in transnational networks across the globe, would be given the name “Empire” by Hardt and Negri, and for them (like Baudrillard), there was no longer any alterity; modernism became postmodernism, Fordism dissolved in the face of post-Fordism, all the previous categories collapsing into one another. Because of this, reactionary revolt as a passage out will never lead to emancipation. We have to go forward:

*We cannot move back to any previous social form, nor move forward in isolation. Rather, we must push through Empire to come out the other side...Empire can be effectively contested only on its own level of generality and by pushing the process that it offers past their present limitations. We have to accept that challenge and learn to think globally and act globally. Globalization must be met with a counter-globalization, Empire with a counter-Empire.*⁹

Flaws

In 1980, Deleuze and Guattari released their follow-up to *Anti-Oedipus*, an exercise in schizoanalytic nomadic thought they titled *A Thousand Plateaus*. Here, they seemed hesitant to their earlier vision of unabashed acceleration, offering instead words of caution. They were necessary words: *Anti-Oedipus* had been written while the revolutionary high of 1968 still hung in the air; but a decade later, left-wing terrorism, rampant drug abuse and rising neoliberalism had generate an aura of pessimism and in certain places, outright despair. They speak of ‘black holes,’ fascistic traps that deterritorializing flows can accelerate themselves into. To make revolution, to engage in processes of becoming, to escape along a line of flight, each operates as a bifurcation point that can lead *outward*, but there exists the dangers of ‘coiling’ inwards, toward structure and binary oppositions, dialectic stateform dependency – and, in the most extreme cases, death.



Nick Land saw this retreat, perceived as a sudden moralizing stance, as being antithetical to the ethos of *Anti-Oedipus* and something in the direction of a betrayal of the work's spirit. His vision was one of capitalism as the harbinger of the end; he had dialed back a portion of their oeuvre and conjoined the schizoid flows to the Freudian death drive, or *thanatos*. If bourgeois humanism forms a reactionary mechanic of power, then only the antihumanism provided by the acceleration of capital and its technological counterparts could finally dissolve what is. In "Meltdown," we find that "Man is something for it to overcome: a problem, drag."¹⁰

Apocalyptic intensities aside, Land has conveniently sidestepped a critical aspect of *Anti-Oedipus*'s analysis of capitalist deterritorialization. If deterritorialization advances the subversive forces in capitalism's own flows, there is always the accompanying process of *reterritorialization*, which draws these unravels energies into a manageable system. These reterritorializations do not happen to spite capitalism, they happened in accordance with it, to stave off the death function that Baudrillard had found:

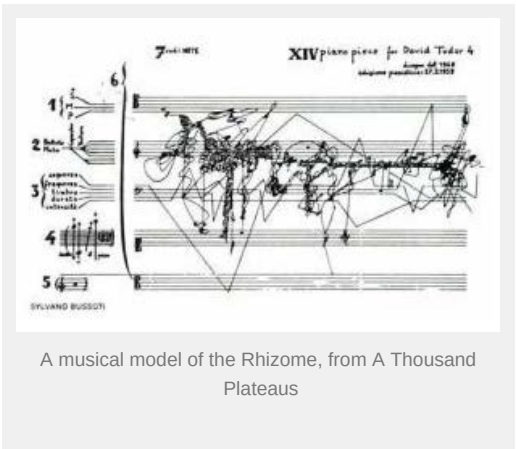
*Capitalism institutes or restores all sorts of residual and artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territories, thereby attempting, the best it can, to recode, to rechannel persons who have been defined in the terms of abstract quantities. Everything returns or recurs: States, nations, families. That is what makes the ideology of capitalism "a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed."*¹¹

We're told in *A Thousand Plateaus* that "the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence... because there are no reterritorialization afterwards..."¹² Thus, we can no longer draw as tidy parallels between nomadic becomings and capitalism as we have to this point, for the true threshold of the nomad is held off, existing only perhaps as a carrot to move power networks to resemble more and more the aesthetic and moral stances of their opposition. As neoliberal capitalism itself became deterritorialized following the end of the Fordist class compact, it simultaneously exalted itself as the great bestower of health, wealth and equality (just think of development programs for the Third World and the philanthropy of industrial and financial giants) while in reality acting as a great destroyer (cyclical crisis, mass wealth inequality, war). To confuse matters more, Deleuze and Guattari point their finger to the stateform itself, the system that was supposed to dissolve away under both Marxist-derived programs and neoliberalism, as the principle actor in the reterritorializations. As we can now see, looking backwards from the vantage point of the latest crises, the state never, ever went away in the neoliberal revolution; it only slightly altered its function, retracing itself in the image of the market. It still creates level after level of bureaucracy, bails-out, enforces laws, regulates, and manages the direction that so-called free trade moves in.

Land once remarked in an interview that "organization is suppression," a phrase so anarchic that it could have been found just as easily in the graffiti of the Situationists in 1968 or in the manifestos of the Italian Autonomists in the late 1970s. Following this logic, we can reach the conclusion that the acceleration of capitalism proper will never bestow a post-suppression environment, by virtue of the existence of the corporate model alone. With the modern corporation, the center of power and politics in the neoliberal sphere, we have a multilevel institution operating with the sanction of the state – through the granting of corporate charters – and, frequently, receives direct financial lines from the public coffers in the form of subsidies. And while the corporation is the principle

arbiter of capitalism's global flows, encompassing the monetary, the material, and human elements, it acts as a lopsided entity, a mass centralization that works *not* with the market, but *against* it. Manuel deLanda, drawing on research of Fernand Braudel, assigns both the corporation and the idea of capitalism itself to the category of the *anti-market* – the systems of “large scale enterprises, with several layers of managerial strata, in which prices are set not taken.”¹³

In contrast to the anti-market is the marketplace proper, a complex “meshwork” of both exchange and production, operating in primarily localized settings and through decentralization – small firms and individuals that actually determine price and labor conditions. deLanda's meshworks were reflected in the CCRU's interest in the bottom-up “street markets... a bustling bazaar culture of trade and ‘cutting deals’”,¹⁴ and also brings to mind Deleuze and Guattari's articulation of the ‘rhizome’, a decentralized network formation that spreads across smooth spaces, free from hierarchy and command. Yet deLanda warns not to look to the meshwork of the market as something completely revolutionary; while they can resist them, they can also reinforce traditional binaries and hierarchies. There is also the issue of growth, which places the meshworks on a natural trajectory that can lead them to become anti-markets. The rhizome model is to be contrasted with that of a tree, but the figurative tree, not the process of further deterritorialization, is what can grow from the marketplace.



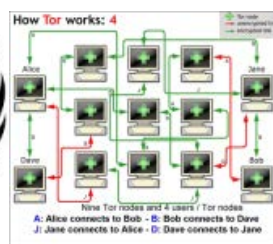
A musical model of the Rhizome, from A Thousand Plateaus

If we are speaking of illusionary rhizomes and false promises of open networks, we can turn to the other side of the accelerationist coin: the advancing marches of technology revolving around the internet itself. An interactive medium encompassing text and image, code and emotion, history and the future, global interrelation, the internet's highly schizophrenic and every-shifting nature, its perpetual self-connection through hyperlinks, makes itself appear to be the fulfillment of the rhizome: “Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be...A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.”¹⁵

But the internet has its trees and has always had its trees, unlike even the the deLandian market, which *becomes* hierarchical and treelike. From the beginning it was an agenda of Cold War politics, born from the research laboratories of DARPA and its allied universities. When it came time for the great privatization, it was handed off to corporate monopolies, anti-markets in the purest sense of the word, free from any real competition or external threats. The telecommunication giants serve as the internet's gatekeepers, the guardians of the flows of information; digital ‘freedom’ comes at the cost of a monthly

subscription and the consent to be monitored. And for many, the freedom doesn't even exist – there is currently a growing crisis, particularly in the US, where people living in rural areas are deprived of internet access. This unfortunate problem stems from the service providers themselves, who simply choose not to operate in these regions because lower population densities would mean lower revenue streams. A double centralization occurs: a digital one, in the form of the ISP's role as a gatekeeper, and a geographical one, where power, knowledge, and opportunities remain situated in the urban zones. To even begin to truly decentralize the world wide web and flatten out its intrinsic hierarchies, it's not a matter of acceleration. It's a matter of a total structural change, a new paradigm for digital futures entirely.

Despite this, however, the spaces of the internet play host to a whole series of deterritorializations. Cyber warmachines – Anonymous, WikiLeaks, the countless advocates of open source technology, social media users in times of political struggle – are capable of crossing the digital threshold and impacting the physical world in very real ways, changing the contours of everyday life. File sharing platforms such as music blogs, torrent sites, and smaller, individualized programs allow capitalist creative destruction to impede on the constructs of copyright and intellectual property, while deeper structures, the darknet and TOR networks, allow for subterfuge and anonymity from the prying eye of government agencies and corporate data collectors.



We can extoll the virtues of these deterritorializations, for they constitute very real examples of radical becomings with the tools we have available. Yet the spectre of reterritorialization haunts them still, with the state taking on the very roles identified in *Anti-Oedipus*. As copyright laws become dismantled with the digitalization of music, film, text and information, governments have stepped in to take an active role in taking down hosting sites – an development situated in a great agenda of internet regulation and creation of watchdog agencies. Very real political repression of WikiLeaks is occurring, while the continual use of the TOR networks, stereotyped as a digital 'wild west', by violent and exploitative criminal elements only amplifies the calls for intervention. The digital sphere has reached a point where it serves as a mirror of the great neoliberal system, a state of affairs that was predicted decades ago by cyberpunk authors. In works such as *Neuromancer*, lauded by Land and the CCRU, technology is inseparable from the human body and his external environment while corporate monoliths act in the void left by the absence of functional government – but there exists a strange contradiction in that individuals living and acting on the level of the physical and digital streets have assumed heightened degree of autonomy while also being subjected to the greater ebbs and flows of power. In the cyberworld, as well as the real world, sources for freedom and the bindings of control are being transmitted from the same source – the schizoid movement of capital itself. Through this paradigm, perhaps we can push acceleration away from its looming black holes and reconnect it, as Hardt and Negri try to do, to some form of revolutionary

politics.

“The street finds its own use for things”

I now sense an extraordinary acceleration in the decomposition of all coordinates. Its a treat just the same. All this has to crumble down, but it won't come from any revolutionary organization. Otherwise you fall back on the most mechanistic utopias of the revolution utopias, the Marxist simplifications... The Italians of Radio Alice have a beautiful saying: when they are asked what has to be built, they answer that the forces capable of destroying this society surely are capable of building something else, yet that will happen on the way. – Felix Guattari, “Why Italy?”¹⁶

At this juncture I would like to interject a new text into the accelerationist canon: *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, recently written by Italian autonomist icon Franco “Bifo” Berardi (who, incidentally, was the founder of the Radio Alice mentioned in the quote above). Its concern certainly isn’t accelerationism per se, but a snapshot of the crisis of largely deterritorialized neoliberalism, taken at the feverpitch of the US Occupy movements, the renewed left-wing insurgency in Europe, and the Arab Spring. As the new democratic consciousness (if it can be called that) swept up malaise and despair and transmorphed them into anti-capitalist meshworks, Bifo reminds us of the crisis of technocapitalism had very real and dangerous possibilities for reterritorializations, harking back to Deleuze and Guattari’s black holes. The text draws forth apocalyptic imagery: the punk refrain of “no future”, violence, the specter of fascism. In many ways, it resembles (in tone, certainly not wording) Land’s own accelerated apocalypse – government’s corruption by “narco-capital” and the transfer of its police and military powers to “borderline-Nazi private security organizations”, the “urban warscape” and the “feral youth cultures” crawling their way through the “derelicted warrens at the heart of darkness.”¹⁷

All these things have come to pass, with the war on drugs transforming Mexico into a failed state, the privatization of warfare and relief with Blackwater in Iraq and New Orleans, the rise of the Golden Dawn in Greece... From here, Land appears not as our Nietzsche, as Fisher claims, but our Antonin Artaud, embodying the crisis in his precognitive, end times-tinged madness, while simultaneously showing potential avenues for exodus, passages to the outside. To quote his former student and fellow CCRUer, Robin MacKay, “academics talked endlessly about the outside, but no-one went there. Land, by exemplary contrast, made experiments in the unknown unavoidable...”¹⁸

Anti-Oedipus, by way of MacKay and Fisher: “A breath of fresh air, a little relation to the outside, that’s all schizoanalysis asks.”¹⁹

Where is this outside, the big other, alterity? As we’ve mentioned, in post-Fordist neoliberalism, its vanished, existing only as prepackaged exoticism. This provides a fundamental paradox – Hardt and Negri, in their own formula of acceleration, repeatedly tell us that Empire must be pushed to the “other side” (where is this other side?) and that exodus from the system constitutes a vital strategy (exodus to where?). Exodus can no longer inhabit a physical outside, so the only place that exodus can occur is *within* – both in the social spaces of capitalism itself and in the individual itself. Again, *nomadic thought*, the traversing even the exteriority inside oneself. But we cannot escape into pure thought, float like the original surrealists amongst the unconscious pools of phantasms

and dreams – or can we? Shed of its Freudian and Stalinist ambitions, surrealism can show how drifting through the mind’s ambiances can create form in the physical world. “Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world.”²⁰ Let us conjoin these notions with George Jackson, by way of *Anti-Oedipus*: “I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon.”²¹

We can now loop this back to one of starting points, Deleuze and Guattari’s recomposition of the unconscious mind as a flowing factory of desiring-machines. Desire is not necessarily libidinal, as Freud and his alcolytes would have it; at its basis, it is a *creative* force. If capitalism has seized desire into its own deterritorializing and reterritorializing processes, then a proper method of acceleration would not have to be capitalism itself, but of the rhizomatic creativity buried within it. How else can we dodge the hierarchies of command and centralization that follow in the stateforms wake?

Land’s acceleration, in the speculative sense and the market sense, concerns itself, at its core, with one thing: pushing past its limits. Here Bifo is central: he notes that in the 90s, capitalism did accelerate, straight into what was predicted by CCRU – a collapse with shades of the apocalypse. And in a similar train of thought, he expounds a thesis that traditional forms of solidarity, and forms of resistance, are an impossibility, assigned to the dustbins of nostalgia that keep the system’s heart beating even when it has, for all intents and purposes, died on the operating table. Instead, he turns to a different form of limit-busting, that of language itself, the experience of which “happens in finite conditions of history and and existence... Grammar is the establishment of limits defining a space of communication.”²² Capitalism, at the end of history, descended into the empty circulation of linguistic signs and symbols, abstracts. Now we can scramble these linguistic parameters further, seize them and appropriate them, use them to eek out new conditions for solidarity. The mechanism he proposes is poetry, “the reopening of the indefinite, the ironic act of exceeding the established meaning of words.” I think back to Magritte and his most famous work of surrealism, the juxtaposition of the image of a pipe with the words ‘this is not a pipe’ – code scrambling need not be poetry alone, but any aesthetic form.



If this linguistic-aesthetic turn seems too abstract, consider that speech itself forms part of the rock on which subjectivity is built: “I am an other, a multiplicity of others, embodied at the intersection of partial components of enunciation, breaching on all sides individuated identity and the organized body.”²³ Guattari divides up the impact of these forms of enunciation, placing on oneside the signifying system of “empty speech”, direct command and logistical control; and on the other, “ordinary speech,” an complex affective system that encompasses not only the words themselves but articulates itself in conjunction with

tonations, rhythms, facial expression, collaboration. Take the academic ivory tower, railed against by Land – theory-talk, political correctness, servitude to the given field’s magistrates and the cookie-cutter essay format, all provide a one-way uniformity in the student body, who pass on these hierarchies and overcodes in their own careers. Empty speech and all that it entails acts as a self-replicating system of control, and what is at stake is an autonomy of subjectivity itself.



Lets look at another example of subjectivity with connections to the CCRU moment: rave culture, the emergence of which Sadie Plant linked to the collapse of Britain’s labor paradigm under Thatcher’s neoliberal revolution as a method for finding new forms of collectivity. Curiously, it resembled deLanda’s meshworks: it initially flourished in the underground, linked by cottage

industries and word of mouth, secret codes and maps pointing the way to parties. The patchwork music, cobbled from various sources and blended into an alchemical mixture, established the smooth sonic space where the rave took place, but the DJ or MC, in collaboration with the ravers, utilized polyphonic enunciations (oohs and ahhs, toasting, complex affective exchanges) to create emergent subjectivities that were far more collective than individual, subjectivities that looked for the outside at a time when none could be found or occur:

*In her memoir Nobody Nowhere, the autistic Donna Williams describes how as a child she would withdraw from a threatening reality into a private preverbal dream-space of ultravivid color and rhythmic pulsations; she could be transfixed for hours by iridescent motes in the air that only she could perceive. With its dazzling psychotropic lights, its sonic pulses, rave culture is arguably a form of collective autism. The rave is utopia in its original etymological sense: a nowhere/nowhen wonderland.*²⁴ (emphasis in original)

Quite literally a deterritorialization in the truest sense of the word – and one following the trajectory of capital acceleration – rave culture was quickly reterritorialized for capitalism by the state: crackdown on illegal parties, the creation of new laws, the centralization of power in the hands of corporate promoters, attacks on MDMA, all these moved rave culture away from the ‘margins’ and into the mainstream. A line of flight consisting of enunciation, aesthetics and movement, it ended up rebolstering the consumptive process of the spectacle, but there are still divergent deterritorializations utilizing the initial ethos against the powers of transnational capitalism. I’m talking here of the alter-globalization movement’s “Reclaim the Streets” (RTS) program of direct action. Rave party and protest collide together in streets of urban space, the arteries of the centers of postmodern capitalism. By occupying the streets and turning them into public bazaars, social centers and dance parties, a new form of social collectivity is produced: the *Common*, not only in the sense of a space of mutual aid and collective work, but also as a form of multifaceted enunciation. The fact that both RTS and the early rave movement latched onto the same theoretical construct – Hakim Bey’s Temporary Autonomous Zone (T.A.Z., a “temporary ‘power-surge’ against normality”)²⁵ – and that Hardt and Negri believe that the *Common* will insue from accelerating Empire into the outside, we can gleem an important lesson: what is being concerned here is not simply a matter of physical space, though that is important. It is of a subjectivity established along lines of multiplicities, frenzied criss-

crosses of speech and affective deterritorialized becomings. Acceleration collapses because neoliberalism can't promise what it said it would. It's up to us to carry on the mantle.



Openings: The Chaos Principle

In November of 2011 I found myself in New York City, moving as one individual in the mass swarm flowing through the streets of the financial district – an event that would have been unimaginable, I believe, without the groundwork laid by things such as RTS and the T.A.Z. As I watched the occupation's internal workings, its rhizomatic networks of working groups, spokes councils, general assemblies and internet spaces, I was struck with a particular thought. It's not easy to place capitalism and its opposition in an easily defineable binary schema, because capitalism, like the people who actively resist it, is a system-in-becoming. Every person who was there was brought to the occupations by the complexity of capitalism's flows, and were tapping it to wrestle it into something different. No two people who occupied in America, or marched in the streets of Europe or fought for democracy in the Middle East – or all those who oscillated between each in assemblages provided by information-communicative technologies – were identical; it was a composition of a myriad of collaescing concepts and complaints, hopes and analyses, intentions and experiences, affects and speech.

Because of this, no singular identity could be generated, nor platform for party-based revolution or reform. That didn't stop the telecommunication-media complexes from trying to find these. "Make yourself a signifier!" they shouted, wanting, hoping, for some fixed point that could be easily digested and assimilated in the bureaucracy of control. They didn't understand that that year's transnational event of collective enunciation wanted to avoid the transformation into "empty speech" and the stodgy, gray stateform (both within and outside government) that comes part and parcel with it. They didn't understand that neoliberalism's chaos was producing yet another kind of chaos, one that was interactive and swelling from the bottom up.



Perhaps "chaos" isn't the best choice of words, for we must define ourselves as separate

from neoliberal's own kind of organized, exploitative chaos. Returning to Deleuze and Guattari, this time through Bifo's work on poetry: "Art is not chaos, but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos."²⁶ The chaosmos, a shift from the "dissonance" generated by accelerated capital and technotronics, "simultaneously creates the aesthetic conditions for the perception and expression of new modes of becoming." The street will find its own use for things, as the cyberpunks proclaimed, and the micro-revolutions that this produces will be aestheticized and multiplied, not Hegelianized; it will exist on the smooth plane of the *virtual*, where there can be endless potentials for flight and finding weapons, bifurcation points and new creations. The chaotic principle must be at work to reestablish sources of alterity and to avoid reterritorialization as much as possible – no more totalizing syntheses...

*The important thing here is not only the confrontation with a new material of expression, but the constitution of complexes of subjectivation: multiple exchanges between individual-group-machine. These complexes of subjectivation actually offer people diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporeality, to get out of their repetitive impasses and, in a certain way, to resingularise themselves... We are not confronted with subjectivity given as in-itself, but with processes of the realisation of autonomy, or autopoiesis...*²⁷

The story goes like this: when we speak of autonomy, autonomy of the subject, of its enunciations and its relations to collective experience, we speak of something that neoliberalism and social democratic governance claimed for its own, but never truly had: plurality. As such, making revolt in the neoliberal epoch itself cannot be a strict, singular platform; principles of autonomy, collective aesthetics and chaosmos run contrary to this. There is no utopia at the end of the road, no messianic communist reality knocking at our doorstep. But this does not disqualify resistance. We have the ability to create autonomy when we resist, and what we demand is space – geophysical, affective, and mental space. *The Commons*, if we so choose. At the very least, the option and ability to live free from command and control.

In at the closing of this dangling, never to be completed essay, I want finish with a final quote from Felix Guattari, as he looked out upon the Brazilian democratic uprisings at the dawn of the 1980s. This, I believe, is precisely the type of sentiments and sensibilities that we must now try to accelerate:

*Yes, I believe that there is a multiple people, a people of mutants, a people of potentialities that appears and disappears, that is embodied in social events, literary events, and musical events... I don't know, perhaps I'm raving, but I think we're in a period of productivity, proliferation, creation, utterly fabulous revolutions from the viewpoint of the emergence of a people. That's molecular revolution: it isn't a slogan or a program, it's something I feel, that I live, in meetings, in institutions, in affects, and in some reflections.*²⁸

¹Nick Land "Meltdown" *Abstract Culture*, Swarm 1
http://www.cru.net/swarm1/1_melt.htm

²Simon Reynolds "Renegade Academia" originally published in *Lingua Franca*, 1999
<http://energyflashbysimonreynolds.blogspot.com/2009/11/renegade-academia->

[cybernetic-culture.html](#)

[3](#)Antonin Artaud, Jack Hirschman (ed.) *Artaud Anthology* City Lights, 1965, pg. 29

[4](#)Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Penguin, 1977, pgs. 239-240

[5](#)Jean-Francois Lyotard *Libidinal Economy* Athlone Press, 2004 pg. 109

[6](#)Ibid., pgs. 113-114

[7](#)Jean Baudrillard *Forget Foucault* Semiotext(e) 2007, pg. 9

[8](#)Benjamin Noys *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* Edinburgh University Press, 2012, pg. 6

[9](#)Baudrillard *Forget Foucault* pg. 12

[9](#)Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri *Empire* Harvard University Press, 2000, pgs. 206-207

[10](#)Land “Meltdown”

[11](#)Deleuze, Guattari *Anti-Oedipus*, pg. 34

[12](#)Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* University of Minnesota Press, 1987 pg. 381

[13](#)Manuel deLanda “Markets and anti-markets in the world economy” *Alamut* April 26th 1998 http://www.alamut.com/subj/economics/de_landa/antiMarkets.html

[14](#)Reynolds “Renegade Academia”

[15](#)Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus*, pg.7

[16](#)Felix Guattari “Why Italy?” in Sylvere Lotringer (ed) *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics* Semiotext(e), 2007 pg. 236

[17](#)Land “Meltdown”

[18](#)Robin MacKay “Nick Land: An Experiment in Inhumanism” *Umelec Magazine*, January, 2012

[19](#)Mark Fisher and Robin MacKay “PomoPhobia” *Abstract Culture*, Swarm 1 http://www.ccru.net/swarm1/1_pomo.htm

[20](#)Herbert Marcuse, quoted in Franklin Rosemont “Herbert Marcuse and Surrealism” *Arsenal* no.4, 1989

[21](#)Deleuze, Guattari *Anti-Oedipus*, pg. 277

[22](#)Franco “Bifo” Berardi *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* Semiotext(e), 2012, pg. 158

[23](#)Felix Guattari *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* Indiana University Press, 1995 pg. 83

[24](#)Simon Reynolds *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture* Routledge, 1999 pg. 248

[25](#)Ibid., pg. 245

[26](#)Berardi *The Uprising* pg. 150

[27](#)Guattari *Chaosmosis*, pg. 7

[28](#)Felix Guattari *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* Semiotext(e), 2007, pg. 9

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skepoet2 says:

April 22, 2013 at 3:57 am

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June 17, 2013 at 9:37 pm

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Michael- says:

June 18, 2013 at 3:38 pm

Just a brilliant piece; so good. Thank you.

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edmundberger says:

June 21, 2013 at 7:23 pm

Ah, thank you for your kind words, Michael! I have rather ambiguous feelings about the accelerationist project, especially now that its splintered into multiheaded thought strand, moving from Land's position (nihilism? rightist? post-Situationist rabble rousing?) to the new leftist model. I've come to view it now as not so much the need to accelerate capitalism (or fetishize the future, or that matter), but the need to "amplify" (drawing on Mony Elkaim) the singularities that capitalism has overcoded for its own.

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arranjames says:

June 12, 2014 at 9:40 pm

Delayed, belated, but y'know. The impression I'm getting at the moment is that left accelerationism is about selective accelerations, and I would read this term "acceleration" as

fundamentally opposed to adaptation. The Darwinian adaptation has had its day- the idea of accommodation to the existent; instead the existent will be made to accommodate to our desires. Other things will be deselected in the process, which isn't to say decelerated because there is no undoing a situation (as everyone everywhere already told the primitivists).



Mark Purcell says:

July 26, 2013 at 5:56 pm

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